



The Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe

Reflection Group

initiated by the

President of the European Commission

and coordinated by the

Institute for Human Sciences

Concluding Remarks

by Kurt Biedenkopf,

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Krzysztof Michalski



Institute for
Human Sciences



Vienna / Brussels, October 2004

This Report represents the opinion of the High-Level Advisory Group only and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Preface

The European Union has undergone extensive enlargement in the last ten years. But at the same time the deepening process has continued, so much so that the Union is about to give itself a new Constitution of its own.

It was with this momentous sequence of events in mind that I felt it was essential for a group of enlightened thinkers, free of all constraints, to reflect on the role that the most deep-rooted values of our shared historical background could play as the binding agent of fellowship and solidarity.

The report presented here is the fruit of their reflections.

It offers an uncompromising diagnosis that remains free of superficial alarmism.

It raises quite a number of questions, particularly as to the power, looking beyond statements of principle, of the links, the presence, the latent force of what I am inclined to call inspiration by fundamental values at the core of the European venture and its daily practice.

These are healthy questions and it would be a great mistake to ignore them.

Accepting this starting point in all intellectual humility is the condition, as the report emphasises, for the emergence of avenues to be explored and of guidelines for action that all deserve thorough study and all deserve the most serious consideration.

This will not, and cannot, be the virtually exclusive prerogative of the Brussels institutional set-up.

We need to secure the involvement of civil society, of centres of learning, memory and research, of places where religious faith and humanist convictions are expressed, of political parties, of associations etc. all networking in a context that is less remote from the Parliaments and Institutions.

This is at the same time both a major project and a demand for particular patterns of thought and conduct addressed to all the active forces at work in this Europe of ours.

I offer my warmest thanks to all the personalities who, through their regularly passionate discussions and valuable individual contributions have done so much to bring this report into being.

I want this report to be a starting point, and I shall work to see that it is.

The starting point for a great debate throughout Europe to place our spiritual, religious and cultural values ever more firmly at the centre of a European venture that offers more and more achievements and more and more promises.

Romano Prodi

The Work of the Reflection Group on the Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe

Introduction

In the spring of 2002, the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, asked the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (Institute for Human Sciences) in Vienna to set up a group of Europeans to reflect on those values that are particularly relevant to the continuing process of European unification and to advise him in this field. The people concerned should be independent individuals, not representatives of political parties, churches or other organisations, people with intellectual credentials, political experience and a stature transcending that of the political parties in their countries.

Over the next few weeks the group was set up and soon started work. Its members are: Kurt Biedenkopf, Silvio Ferrari, Bronislaw Geremek, Arpad Göncz, John Gray, Will Hutton, Jutta Limbach, Krzysztof Michalski, Ioannis Petrou, Alberto Quadrio Curzio, Michel Rocard and Simone Veil.

We have decided to direct our attention at a few specific areas that may be core issues in the process of European integration.

- One of them is, of course, the enlargement of the Union to include the countries of the former Soviet empire. How will this process alter the **conditions of European solidarity**?
- The issue of **Europe's religions** may, we felt, be of particular interest in this context. This issue was to become our second main topic. Particular attention was paid to the role of Islam in the European public sphere.
- If it is our aim to reflect on Europe as a project we cannot, of course, neglect the issue of **Europe's role in the world**. What tasks could emerge for Europe from its new self-image, which may need further clarification? Are the existing institutions – at both European and international level – consistent with this new self-image? What options are there when it comes to developing relations between the new Europe and the Others, particularly the United States of America? These interrelated issues constituted our third set of topics.

With the European Commission's support, the Group has repeatedly met with experts on each set of issues. Additionally, in order to involve from the very outset as broad a swathe of the general public as possible in our discussions, rather than presenting them with a *fait accompli*, the Group has held a series of public debates in several European capitals: the first of these (organised in cooperation with the Warsaw-based Stefan Batory Foundation) was held in Warsaw, in the residence of the Polish President, the second (organised in cooperation with the Austrian Industrialists' Association) took place in Prince Schwarzenberg's palace in Vienna, while the third and fourth were held in Paris (in cooperation with *La République des idées* and hosted by the French Minister for Foreign

Affairs, Dominique de Villepin) and Berlin (hosted by his German counterpart, Joschka Fischer).

The intellectual outcomes of the Group's meetings and the public debates have been presented in German in IWM's journal *Transit - Europaeische Revue*, nr. 26 and 27 (Verlag Neue Kritik, Frankfurt a.M., 2003/2004). The respective articles are also prepared for publication in English.

Another means of bringing our ideas to the attention of a broader cross-section of the European public are the newspaper columns written by the members of our group on the topics under discussion. These are published in cooperation with *Project Syndicate*, a non-commercial international group of presently 223 daily newspapers in Europe and far beyond. 12 of these columns have appeared so far in 49 newspapers and 32 countries.

We hope the results of the Reflection Group's work can give fresh impetus to the debate on the new union of Europe.

Krzysztof Michalski

Further details are available at: www.iwm.at/r-reflec.htm and http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/social-sciences/index_en.html.

On the Intellectual, Spiritual and Cultural Dimension of Europe

Concluding remarks*

1. The European Union now faces perhaps the greatest challenge in its history. It is expanding – dramatically so – with more than 70 million people becoming eligible for new European passports this year. Simultaneously with this expansion, the Union is attempting to transform itself into a new type of political entity, as it radically redefines itself through the process of drafting and ratifying a constitution.

The Union's expansion, bringing in ten new member countries, also brings into the Union people who are often much poorer and culturally vastly different from the majority of the citizens in the older member states. The vast majority of these new EU citizens, many of whom endured decades of subjugation to Communist regimes, hold thoughts and values indelibly marked by experiences unfamiliar to long-time EU citizens. As a result, economic and cultural differences within the Union have, at a stroke, become much greater and more intense. The constitutional process to define the Union in a more ambitious way fuels this intensity to an even greater degree.

Faced with **growing diversity** and the rigours of establishing a **more demanding kind of unity**, what forces can hold the expanded, redefined European Union together? What moral concepts, which traditions, what goals are capable of bringing together the Union's diverse inhabitants in a democratic structure, and so underpin and anchor the European constitution?

To examine these questions Romano Prodi, the President of the European Commission, appointed academics and politicians from a number of Union member countries to reflect on the intellectual and cultural dimension of an EU in the process of enlargement - in particular to consider the relevance of this dimension to the cohesion of the expanded and redefined Union.

2. **Hitherto** the Union has been enormously successful. It established durable bonds which made a European civil war virtually impossible. The Union established a zone of peace founded on **freedom, the rule of law**, and **social justice**. Within its member states the Union speeded the task of overcoming the economic consequences of the Second World War, promoting reconstruction and, later, unprecedented affluence across Europe.

Economic integration and the gradual abolition of national economies led the way to this peaceful order. After the First World War, the French army occupied the Ruhr in order to prevent a revival of German heavy industry. After the Second World War, the French and

the Germans decided to integrate their coal and steel industries. In doing so they laid the foundation stone for a lasting European peace.

3. A strong political will in the six founding states was needed both to make this development possible and to sustain it. Such a will was possible because of several factors that encouraged integration: the profound and widespread **shock of the Second World War**; the mounting **threat posed by the Soviet Union**, and the **economic dynamism** released by the founding of the Union's precursor, the European Economic Community (EEC), and further enhanced by the integration of national economies.

4. As memories of the Second World War faded and the risk of conflict between the Atlantic Alliance and the Soviet Union receded, the transformation of the EEC into the European Community, and finally into the European Union, pushed the Union's economic goals ever more to the fore. Economic growth, improvement in living standards, extending and enhancing systems of social protection, and rounding off the common market assumed a priority.

But given the growing number of member states, economic and social differences expanded – as did the expectations of EU citizens. Over time, it became increasingly evident that economic integration – no matter how important it and its political consequences may be – is incapable of substituting for the political forces that originally propelled European integration and cohesion.

This is why the aims formulated a few years ago by the Lisbon Council – to make Europe the most competitive economic region in the world by 2010, to establish the labour participation rate of 70%, and to bring about lasting growth, affluence, and social justice – have effectively disappeared from public consciousness. Not only have these goals been overtaken by events; they also do nothing to bring Europeans any closer together. They do not and cannot establish the internal cohesion that is necessary for the European Union; nor, indeed, can economic forces alone provide cohesion for any political identity. To function as a viable and vital polity, the European Union needs a firmer foundation.

It is no coincidence that economic integration is not enough to drive European political reform. Economic integration simply does not, of itself, lead to political integration because **markets cannot produce a politically resilient solidarity**. Solidarity – a genuine sense of civic community – is vital because the competition that dominates the marketplace gives rise to powerful centrifugal forces. Markets may create the economic basis of a polity and are thereby an indispensable condition of its political constitution. But they cannot on their own produce political integration and provide a constitutive infrastructure for the Union. The original expectation, that the political unity of the EU would be a consequence of the European common market has proven to be illusory.

* These remarks do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Indeed, the current debate over the reform of the Union's Growth and Stability Pact shows once again that economic integration, symbolised by the launching of the euro, can only continue as a basis of Europe's peaceful order if it is followed by a deeper political integration within the Union. A currency union means a common economic policy. But when the forces of cohesion based on shared economic successes wane or are overshadowed by internal competition, a common economic policy requires political integration, i.e. a level of internal cohesion that remains effective even when economic interests diverge.

So Europe's political union demands **political cohesion**, a politically grounded community bound by the ties of solidarity. Both the future of the Union and the dimensions of its political integration will be decided by whether these political forces of cohesion exist and whether they prove to be adequate in times of crisis.

5. Recognising this, the countries of the European Union deliberately set out on the path of political integration. The Union's constitutional process expresses this decision. But how much political integration is necessary and how politically potent should the Union become? **To what end** does the Union need far-reaching **freedom of political action**?

5.1. First, because an economic order never evolves in a value-free environment. It needs a legal framework and protection, the development of necessary institutions and the establishment and enforcement by the state of the standards and duties forged and agreed among the people. An effective and just economic order must also be embedded in the morals, customs, and expectations of human beings, as well as in their social institutions. So the manner in which the larger European economic area – the common market – is in harmony with the values of European citizens, as varied as these may be, is no mere academic problem; it is a fundamental and political one. The constant need to make Europe's political expression reflect the values of Europe's citizens is as significant as the functioning of the common market itself.

5.2. Second, this task, the full extent of which became evident with the completion of the common market, requires political institutions with legislative, administrative, and judicial functions. Only by developing such institutions (for example, a structure of economic governance that can manage the currency union) and assuring their political legitimacy, can a viable and vital political entity be created. The Union's constitutional process and the subsequent adoption of the European constitutional treaty will, it is expected, provide a lasting legitimacy for the institutional framework of a politically constituted Europe. The constitutional treaty is intended to define the Union's political unity.

5.3. Third, the Union also needs freedom of political action because it confronts a myriad of new tasks:

- overcoming the consequences of Europe's aging population;
- managing, both politically and legally, the desire of people from around the globe to immigrate into the Union;

- dealing with the increasing inequality that is the direct result of increased immigration as well as the Union's expansion;
- preserving peace in a globalised world.

6. So where are the forces of cohesion for the new political Union to be found if the common interests produced by economic integration are no longer sufficient? We believe that the older forces that animated European unification are no longer sufficiently powerful to provide genuine political cohesion, and that, therefore, **new sources of energy must be looked for and found in Europe's common culture.**

This does not, of course, mean that the powers which have served until now will play no role in the future. But what has changed today is the **relative significance** of the existing forces of cohesion, and their relative contribution to the future unity of Europe. As the old forces of integration – desire for peace, external threats, and economic growth – are losing their effectiveness, the role of Europe's common culture – the spiritual factor of European integration – will inevitably grow in importance as a source of unity and cohesion.

At the same time the meaning of European culture needs to be better understood and made politically effective. A mere list of common European values is not enough to serve as the basis of European unity, even if the charter of basic rights included in the Union's constitutional treaty points in this direction. This is so because every attempt to codify "European values" is inevitably confronted by a variety of diverging national, regional, ethnic, sectarian, and social understandings. This diversity of interpretation cannot be eliminated by a constitutional treaty, even if backed up by legislation and judicial interpretation.

Still, despite such difficulties of definition, there can be no doubt that there exists a common European cultural space: a variety of traditions, ideals, and aspirations, often intertwined and at the same time in tension with one another. These traditions, ideals, and aspirations bring us together in a shared context and make us "Europeans": citizens and peoples capable of a political unity and a constitution that we all recognise and experience as "European".

The common European cultural space cannot be firmly defined and delimited; its borders are necessarily open, not because of our ignorance, but in principle — because European culture, indeed Europe itself, is not a "fact". **It is a task and a process.**

What is European culture? What is Europe? These are questions that must be constantly posed anew. So long as Europe is of the present, and not simply the past, they can never be conclusively answered. Europe's identity is something that must be negotiated by its peoples and institutions. Europeans can and must adapt themselves and their institutions, so that European values, traditions, and conceptions of life can live on and be effective. At the same time, the Union and its citizens must make their values endure as a basis of a common identity through ever-changing conditions.

Europe and its cultural identity thus depend on a constant confrontation with the new, the different, the foreign. Hence the question of European identity will be answered in part by its immigration laws, and in part by the negotiated accession terms of new members. Neither of these – either the immigration laws or the terms of accession – can be determined a priori on the basis of fixed, static definitions, such as a catalogue of "European values".

7. If Europe is not a fact, but a task, neither can there be any fixed, once and for all defined European boundaries, be they internal or external. Europe's boundaries too must always be renegotiated. It is not geographical or national borders, then, that define the European cultural space – it is rather the latter which defines the European geographical space, a space that is in principle open.

This also means that the common **European cultural space cannot** be defined **in opposition to national cultures**. Polish farmers and British workers should not see "European culture" as something foreign or even threatening. For the same reason European culture **cannot** be defined **in opposition to a particular religion** (such as Islam). What constitutes the content of "European culture" is not a philosophical question that can be answered a priori; nor is it a merely historical question. It is a question that calls for political decisions which attempt to demonstrate the significance of tradition in the face of future tasks that Europe's Union must address.

8. European culture, that open space which must be forever redefined, does not, of itself, establish European unity. That unity also requires a political dimension and the decisions that it engenders. But the common European culture is what gives politics the opportunity to make Europe into a unified political entity.

The unity of Europe is **not**, however, **only a political task**. Politics can create only the basic conditions for European unification. Europe itself is far more than a political construct. It is a complex – a "culture" – of institutions, ideas and expectations, habits and feelings, moods, memories and prospects that form a "glue" binding Europeans together – and all these are a foundation on which a political construction must rest. This complex – we can speak of it as **European civil society** – is at the heart of political identity. It defines the conditions of successful European politics, and also the limits of state and political intervention.

In order to foster the cohesion necessary for political unity, European politics must thus support the emergence and development of a civil society in Europe. It is through these institutions of civil society that our common European culture can become a reality. But this also means that politics and state institutions must be ready to recognize their limits.

This self-limitation implies that the political culture of Europe must be compatible with the sense of community rooted in a common European culture. To lay claim to a common European culture and history as the basis of political identity, European political institutions

must live up to the expectations engendered by the European cultural tradition. In particular, the exercise of political power must be based on a persuasive and transparent political leadership, rather than express itself as bureaucratic action of questionable legitimacy. Decentralisation of public discussion and the processes of decision-making is especially important. Indeed, only decentralisation can do justice to the cultural variety and the wealth of forms of social organisation that make up the European civil society.

9. If the countries of Europe are to grow together into a viable political union, the people of Europe must be prepared for a **European solidarity**. This solidarity must be stronger than the universal solidarity which binds (or should bind) all human beings together and underlies the idea of humanitarian aid.

European solidarity – the readiness to open one’s wallet and to commit one’s life to others because they, too, are Europeans – is not something that can be imposed from above. It must be more than **institutional solidarity**. It must be felt by Europeans as individuals. When **individual solidarity** is not there, institutionally-based solidarity is not enough to bring a polity into being.

The intellectual, economic, and political tendencies of recent decades - not least the advance of individualism - have led to an erosion of many forms of social solidarity. The crisis of the welfare state may be understood as a consequence of this development. This erosion may also be felt in the context of the recent European enlargement: it is reflected in the diminished willingness – in comparison with earlier expansions – among the citizens of older member countries to lend a hand, economically and politically, to the newcomers.

Strengthening of pan-European solidarity is one of the most important long-term tasks of European politics. In trying to accomplish this task, we should not labour under the illusion that the need for solidarity can be satisfied by institutional measures alone. Rather, all institutional measures must be sustained by the readiness of the population to manifest their own spirit of solidarity. It is thus important to give solidarity an active and prospective, rather than passive and retrospective, dimension: we must define it in terms of the new common tasks that Europe must address – rather than with respect to past achievements in sharing our wealth with the existing members of the Union.

10. A particular challenge for European solidarity arises from the expansion of the Union to countries previously forming part of the Soviet empire. How we deal with this challenge will be decisive for the future of Europe.

How will this expansion alter the conditions of European solidarity? What do the new members bring to the common table? Will they, as many fear, be mainly spoilers, and will they - traumatised by totalitarianism and lacking a strong Enlightenment tradition – slow down, or even bring to a halt, the process of the Union's democratisation? Will they, because of their historically and strategically determined closeness to the United States,

frustrate Europe's aspirations to a common foreign policy? Or will the new members not only expose the Union to new dangers, but also open up new opportunities?

The year 1989 ushered Europe into a new age. It did not just make possible the enlargement of Europe to the former Communist East. It also enriched Europe. That is why the new members, despite their economic weakness, should be taken in as equal partners in the Union. They should be able to shape the new union together with the old members. But we must look also for other links, for the European face of their traditions and experiences.

That the European Union was given, in 1989, a historic opportunity of rebirth was in large part due to the revolutionary uprisings of people in the Communist-ruled Eastern Europe. The East European revolutions were proof of the strength of the **solidarity of a civil society**. They are the best evidence that true political realism must take the existence of these bonds into account – and not only the interests writ in stone and mortar of political institutions.

11. In the search for the forces capable of establishing cohesion and identity in the European Union, the question of the **public role of European religions** is particularly important.

Over the last few centuries, European democratic societies, learning from tragic experience, have attempted to remove religion from the political sphere. Religion was considered, with good reason, to be divisive, not conciliatory. That may still be the case today. But Europe's religions also have a potential to bring people in Europe together, instead of separating them.

We believe that the presence of religion in the public sphere cannot be reduced to the public role of the churches or to the societal relevance of explicitly religious views. Religions have long been an inseparable component of the various cultures of Europe. They are active "under the surface" of the political and state institutions; they also have an effect on society and individuals. The result is a new wealth of forms of religion entwined with cultural meanings.

Even in Europe, where modernisation and secularisation appear to go hand in hand, public life without religion is inconceivable. The community-fostering power of Europe's religious faiths should be supported and deployed on behalf of the cohesion of the new Europe. The risks involved, however, should not be overlooked. These include a possible invasion of the public sphere by religious institutions, as well as the threat that religion may be used to justify ethnic conflicts. It must be remembered that many apparent religious conflicts have political or social causes, and that they may be solved by social measures before they become religiously charged.

The questions concerning the public role of religion in Europe resurfaced recently because of the Balkan wars, the Muslim immigration into Europe, and (so far less dramatically) the

prospect of Turkey's becoming an EU member. The question of the **political relevance of Islam** comes to the forefront in this connection.

It is, to be sure, hard to deny that the increasing presence of the various forms of Islam in Europe's public space poses both new opportunities and new dangers for European integration. It potentially calls into question the prevailing current ideas about Europe's public space. Among European Moslems as well, there is a tendency to detach their religion from the specific cultural and social context of their homelands, and this may have potentially dangerous consequences. But the only feasible path toward a solution of the problems posed by Islam in Europe consists in understanding the consequences of transplanting Islam into a European context, not in a frontal confrontation between the abstractions of "Christian Europe" and "Islam".

12. What is the impact of the intellectual and cultural meaning of Europe on Europe's role in the world? To the extent that Europe acknowledges the values inherent in the rules that constitute the European identity, those very same values will make it impossible for Europeans not to acknowledge the duty of solidarity toward non-Europeans. This globally defined solidarity imposes on Europe an obligation to contribute, in accordance with its ability, to the securing of world peace and the fight against poverty. But despite this global calling, there can be no justification for attempting to impose, perhaps with the help of the institutions of a common European foreign and defence policy, any specific catalogue of values on other peoples.

The fundamental dilemma of European foreign policy is the tension between the logic of peace and the logic of cohesion. Europe sees itself as both a **zone of peace** and a **community of values**. This dilemma cannot be solved a priori. There is no essence of Europe, no fixed list of European values. There is no "finality" to the process of European integration.

Europe is a project of the future. With every decision, not only its zone of peace, its institutions, its political, economic and social order, but also its very identity and self-determination are opened for questioning and debate. In principle this has been the case throughout Europe's history. Europe's capacity for constant change and renewal was and remains the most important source of its success and its unique character. This source must always be recognised anew and given an institutional form: through European politics, through civil society, and through the force of European culture. In the end, it all comes to this: we must sustain and use our European heritage, and not allow it to perish.

October 2004

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Sandro Gozi (organiser)

European Commission, Political Assistant of President Prodi

Calendar

Meetings

Brussels, 29 January 2003

Launch meeting

Brussels, 5 May 2003

Conditions of European Solidarity

Brussels, 21 May 2003

The Role of Religion in European Integration

Public debates

Warsaw, 29 May 2003

The Borders of Europe

Vienna, 10 -11 October 2003

After the Enlargement

Paris, 9-10 January 2004

Islam and Europe

Berlin, 3 March 2004

Europe's Responsibility in the World of Today

Commentaries

by members and experts of the Reflection Group published in European newspapers in collaboration with *Project Syndicate*

Kurt Biedenkopf

Making Culture Count

Silvio Ferrari

The Secular and the Sacred in Europe's Constitution

Bronislaw Geremek

The Two Communities of Europe

Nilüfer Göle

The Islamist Identity

Jutta Limbach

Educating Europe

Bhikhu Parekh

Does Islam Threaten Democracy?

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Olivier Roy

Islamic Evangelism

Jacques Rupnik

Look East To Save Europe's Social Market

Aleksander Smolar

Europe's Solidarity under Siege

Charles Taylor

Seeking Sovereignty, in Iraq and Europe

Die Beiträge der letzten beiden Hefte von Transit stehen im Zusammenhang mit der Arbeit der vom IWM gebildeten Reflexionsgruppe über die geistige und kulturelle Dimension Europas (vgl. www.iwm.at/t-26txt1.htm sowie www.iwm.at/r-reflec.htm). Sie gehen z.T. auf öffentliche Debatten der Gruppe zurück, die in Brüssel, Warschau, Wien, Paris und Berlin stattfanden.

Europäische Verbindlichkeiten I

Krzysztof Michalski **Editorial**

Bronislaw Geremek

Welche Werte für das neue Europa?

Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde

Bedingungen der europäischen Solidarität

Kurt Biedenkopf

In Vielfalt geeint:

Was hält Europa zusammen?

Osterweiterung als Herausforderung

Heather Grabbe

Hat Solidarität noch eine Chance?

Jacques Rupnik

Erweiterung *light*?

Janos Matyas Kovacs

Zwischen Ressentiment und Indifferenz

Barbara Tóth **Reifprüfung 1989.**

Photographien

Religionen und europäische Solidarität

Danièle Hervieu-Léger

Religion und sozialer Zusammenhalt

David Martin

Religionmuster in Europa

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Die erweiterte EU und die USA

Jacques Rupnik

Amerikas beste Freunde in Europa

Ivan Krastev

Das Jahrhundert des Anti-Amerikanismus?

Mit zwei Kommentaren:

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